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ABSTRACT

This fastback summarizes the basic components of a therapeutic supervision model as a help for administrators in training and supervising teachers who are involved in advising students. Therapeutic supervision is designed to help all teachers understand the social, emotional, and intellectual dynamics of advising and helping students who may be emotionally needy. The focus of such training ard supervision is to assist teachers in defining and maintaining professional boundaries, thereby avoiding allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Two specific hazards must be addressed: the risk of stepping across professional boundaries and becoming too personally involved with students, a situation that can lead to actual or alleged sexual misconduct, and ignorance of legal liability issues which can lead to lawsuits based on charges of malpractice or misconduct. Several case studies in which teachers became involved in sexual misconduct with students are summarized. The therapeutic training and supervision model is described, covering training teacher-advisors, modeling advisory relationships, supervising teacher-advisors, and reorganizing and overcoming resistance to therapeutic supervision. (ND)

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Preventing Teacher Sexual Misconduct

William L. Fibkins

ED 406 372

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William L. Fibkins is a writer, lecturer, and education consultant specializing in empowering and training administrators, teachers, and counselors to restructure school-based teacher training and student support services in middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools. His training programs also include leadership and peer counseling training for students and parents.

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Preventing Teacher Sexual Misconduct

by
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Introduction

Working effectively with at-risk students demands that teachers take on new roles as advisors and helpers. These roles often bring teachers into closer, more intimate contact with their students than is customary in normal classroom interactions. While such close contact is necessary and beneficial, it also can create problems if teachers do not clearly understand their professional boundaries.

Many teachers lack training in how to conduct close, helping relationships with students. Such helping relationships often involve discussions of emotions, and students may share intimate thoughts and feelings that can provide teachers with insights into their problems and motivations for learning. By developing close relationships and getting to know their students on a personal level, teachers can discover ways to help at-risk students avoid problems and develop the necessary drive for school success. However, professional training for most teachers is limited to the pedagogy of the classroom and does not include sufficient practice in one-on-one advising and counseling. When teachers

say, "I'm not trained to help students with their personal problems," they are usually right on target. In a very real sense, many teachers are ill-prepared for the advisory tasks that many administrators and parents now expect them to perform.

When teachers are poorly prepared as advisors and helpers, they are themselves at risk — of making costly mistakes that can damage their professional and personal lives and the lives of their students and the families they are trying to help. Two specific hazards must be addressed:

Hazard #1: When untrained teachers take on roles as advisors and helpers, they risk stepping across professional boundaries and becoming too personally involved with students, which can lead to actual or alleged sexual misconduct.

Some teachers start out as advisors and helpers and over time become confidants, friends, companions, surrogate mothers and fathers, and eventually lovers. For example, in a 1991 survey of former students at a North Carolina high school, 13% of the graduates reported that they had engaged in sex with a teacher during their high school years (*New York Times* 1995, p. 37).

Teachers who have not been trained to see the hazards involved in close contact with students can become too involved. When that involvement includes sexual relations, much damage can be done to all concerned. Whenever a case of sexual misconduct develops, regardless of guilt or innocence, the mere fact of the case has a chilling effect on teacher-student relations generally. The message conveyed to other teachers — sometimes

directly stated by administrators, teachers union officials, or colleagues — is: *Pull back. Don't become involved.* Clearly this message diminishes teachers' ability to work with students who need close contact that is positive, helping, and affirming.

Hazard #2: When untrained teachers take on roles as advisors and helpers, they sometimes ignore — or may be uninformed about — legal liability issues, which can lead to lawsuits based on charges of malpractice or misconduct.

When teachers take on the role of advisor, they can inadvertently create an appearance of intimate personal involvement with their students. In fact, many teachers in this role do not become sexually involved with their students, but they do become involved in other ways that may be seen as "too intimate" by parents, administrators, or colleagues.

For example, the teacher-advisor may take a student to lunch or dinner regularly, write daily or weekly notes of support, serve as a friend and confidant for decisions, and even give the student presents or money. Some would describe this teacher's behavior as inappropriate. However, such behavior may be simply naive, as an untrained teacher may be unaware of the potential problems that can arise from such conduct.

The key to avoiding both of these hazards is training. Teachers need to know where and how to draw the line between professional care and unprofessional conduct in close interpersonal relations with students. Such training should help teachers understand how best to assist at-risk students within legal and ethical boundaries.

The purpose of this fastback is to summarize the basic components of a therapeutic supervision model. This model is designed to help administrators train and supervise teachers who are involved in advising students. The focus of such training and supervision is to assist teachers in defining and maintaining professional boundaries, thereby avoiding sexual misconduct or allegations of impropriety.

Case Studies of Teacher-Student Sexual Misconduct

To set the stage for reviewing the therapeutic supervision model, it will be helpful to briefly examine some cases in which teachers became involved in sexual misconduct with students.

The Gary Jarvis Case

Gary Jarvis was a 40-year-old history teacher at Sachem High South in Lake Ronkonkoma on Long Island, New York. According to a *Newsday* report (19 July 1994, p. A4), Jarvis had been teaching for 17 years when he was arrested for allegedly having after-school sex at motels with a 17-year-old female student and fondling a 15-year-old female in a classroom. Jarvis was convicted and sent to prison.

Before imposing the sentence, the judge read aloud portions of letters sent to him by a Sachem High School teacher and the superintendent of Sachem schools, urging prison time for Jarvis and saying that his be-

havior had eroded public esteem for teachers. "He has betrayed a public trust and has victimized young, impressionable students," wrote the superintendent. An unnamed colleague of Jarvis asked the judge to make an example of him, saying, "This may, in a small way, help to lessen the loss of respect of parents and students for teachers."

During the trial the 17-year-old student, with whom Jarvis was accused of having sex, said she grew up fatherless and that Jarvis, her 10th-grade history teacher, was a father figure. "He began giving me attention that he didn't give other kids." She reported that she gradually began to confide in Jarvis, told him her troubles, and was encouraged to accompany him to motel rooms. The 15-year-old teen, whom Jarvis was accused of fondling, made a similar charge, saying that Jarvis "brainwashed" her into believing her parents did not care for her.

As an experienced teacher, Jarvis might reasonably have been expected to understand the dangers of passing beyond the professional boundaries and becoming personally and sexually involved with students. But it appears that he did not. Either he did not see trouble coming, or he saw the red light but ignored it.

However, Jarvis was not alone in ignoring the red lights. According to the police investigation, he took the 17-year-old student to local motels for nearly a year. When the relationship ended and she no longer wanted to meet him, his infatuation became even more visible. The investigating detective reported that when "she didn't want any part of him anymore, he was running

around looking for her in the neighborhood. . . . The parents after a while realized something was wrong."

Only after Jarvis' behavior was out of control for more than a year did anyone take notice. Then the parents became alarmed. The student talked to the high school principal, and an investigation was started. Finally, Jarvis was suspended without pay and the police were called in.

The John Schaenman Case

John Schaenman, a 33-year-old teacher and soccer coach at New Hope Elementary School in Orange County, North Carolina, was cleared of molestation charges in September 1994. But those charges alone cast a shadow over his personal life and professional career.

According to a report in the *News & Observer* (29 September 1994, p. A1), Schaenman spent much of his time mentoring boys of various ages. He invited the youngsters to play tennis with him, spend the night at his apartment, and take trips out of town. In 1993 a 20-year-old male alleged that Schaenman had taken indecent liberties with him when he was 15 years old. Although a judge later dismissed the charges, this situation underscores the need for all teachers to carefully examine their interactions and relations with students.

For example, many of his colleagues believe that Schaenman was unwise in allowing students to spend the night at his apartment. Elvia Walker, a 29-year veteran educator and principal of West Cary Middle School, said in the newspaper report: "I've had kids who

could tell me anything. . . . It never would have crossed my mind to have them spend the night. There was a line that I didn't cross and a line they didn't cross."

The Schaenman case has prompted school board members to wonder whether firmer guidelines regarding contacts between teachers and students need to be developed. "I would hate to see teachers afraid of developing friendships in this system," said school board member, Susan Dovenbarger, "But we need a better idea of what's safe for teachers and what's safe for students."

The Glenn Harris Case

In 1995 Glenn Harris was a 33-year-old physical education teacher in New York City. According to a report in the *New York Times* (11 May 1995, p. B1), Christina Rosado, a 15-year-old student, fell head over heels for Harris at the Creative Learning Community, an alternative school in East Harlem. Her love, apparently, did not go unrequited. After Christina's mother learned about the affair in March 1995, the girl and Harris disappeared together on a cross-country tour. Although it appeared that Rosado had gone voluntarily with Harris, an arrest warrant was issued charging Harris with kidnapping the ninth-grader.

The Creative Learning Community is an alternative school for under-performing or high-risk children. The school encourages friendship relations between teachers and students. But it was clear to many of Harris' colleagues that Harris, who was fresh out of graduate school, was crossing the bounds of propriety. Harris was

observed talking with the girl with the classroom door closed, strolling with her in Central Park, and taking her out for a birthday dinner.

Some of Harris' colleagues complained that the school administration was lax in dealing with the budding relationship. "The administration has a responsibility for the safety of the students," said one teacher, "but appropriate measures were not taken." Some of the teachers said that they had complained to the administration as early as the previous fall that Rosado and Harris appeared to be romantically involved.

Others saw the situation in a different light. Several colleagues and students described him as attractive and trustworthy. He was "not a guy you'd watch out for," a school official said. "This is a guy everybody trusted." A neighbor of Harris, Desire Core, said that Harris had told her he enjoyed his job but "was a little scared about the younger girls having a crush on him." She added, "We talked about that being normal for young girls with him being a good-looking older man and a teacher."

Harris surrendered to police on 16 May 1995 and justified his actions by painting himself as Rosado's savior. Harris said, "A student came to me with horrific tales of brutal family abuse that lasted years and years. Whatever happens I hope someone steps in. She is a beautiful person and deserves respect."

Other Cases

A number of other cases similar to these have been reported. Following are a few examples.

Alois Dlhopolsky, a popular science teacher known as "Dr. D" at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Hicksville on Long Island, New York, was fired from his job in February 1995 when a former student reported sexual encounters she had with "Dr. D" to police (*Newsday*, 22 February 1995, p. 7). Dlhopolsky pleaded not guilty. His lawyer said, "It's the kind of thing that can happen to any teacher. I guess his mistake was being friends with her at all."

Kelly Ann Galligan, a teacher in Wiscasset, Maine, was accused of having sex with a 14-year-old student. She was described by her lawyer as a teacher who believed her job did not end when she left the classroom. Galligan spent many nonteaching hours tutoring students and helping to steer them away from drugs. She resigned her teaching position in 1994 as a result of the accusation (*Boston Globe*, 9 March 1995, p. 26).

According to a report in the *New York Times* (21 May 1995, p. 37), David Drummond, a track coach at Automotive High School in Brooklyn, pleaded guilty to having sex with a 15-year-old student.

Guidance counselor Roger Krubiner of Park West High School was accused of persuading a girl to have sex with him (*New York Times*, 21 May 1995, p. 37).

Emanuele Millilo, a business teacher at John Adams High School in Queens, was accused of seducing a 15-year-old female member of the Future Business Leaders of America Club (*New York Times*, 2 June 1995, p. B1).

Janicelyn Manguai-Santiago, a teacher aide at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in the Bronx, was accused of spending the night with a 14-year-old student. She was

charged with sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child (*New York Times*, 2 June 1995, p. B1)

Learning from the Cases

The point of these cases is not guilt or innocence but accusation, which can destroy careers, personal lives, and the professional credibility of schools and colleagues, regardless of the outcome of legal actions. Some of these educators, such as Gary Jarvis, have been convicted. Others, such as John Schaenman, have been exonerated but still face increased scrutiny in their schools and communities.

The common denominator in all of these cases is that no one really "wins." The accused teachers, guilty or innocent, face public humiliation; many either lose their job or return to school under a cloud of suspicion. Their families face similar consequences. Nor is the glare of public scrutiny limited to the adult in the case. The student, particularly if he or she is a teenager, often is seen as at least partly at fault and, in some cases, may be blamed for "getting the teacher in trouble." Humiliated, sometimes shunned by other students and teachers, these already troubled youngsters often encounter increased problems in dealing with school and home life as a result of their involvement with the unprofessional teacher.

Thus an important question is, What can school administrators and teacher leaders who are committed to the idea of teachers being advisors and helpers learn from such cases? And how can that learning be in-

corporated into training that will help teachers avoid stepping over professional boundaries? Following are summary points:

1. Experienced teachers can get into trouble when acting as helpers, because experience alone does not compensate for lack of training in effective advising.
2. Some teachers misunderstand, misuse, and abuse the affection directed toward them by needy students. Teacher advisors need to understand the emotional components of their relationships with students.
3. Teachers need to recognize the red lights that point to unprofessional intimacy, such as becoming a "father figure" or confidant, receiving or writing personal letters, and seeing students in private or nonschool settings.
4. School administrators and colleagues need to recognize the danger signals when they observe them in other teachers' interactions with students — and they need to know how to intervene.
5. Administrators need to listen to the concerns of their staff and use staff feedback to intervene in situations where teachers may be at risk of crossing professional boundaries. Ignoring a problem sends a message to the staff that if they get into trouble, they will have nowhere to turn within the school for help. The implicit message is: Handle the problem yourself. Some teachers will not be able to do so.

6. Administrators and teacher leaders need to model appropriate interactions and relationships with students. They also need to model professional mentoring skills. Being a good observer and listener and being able to confront a troubled teacher to offer care, support, and critical feedback are skills than many administrators possess but sometimes are reluctant to use in controversial situations. This reluctance can be overcome with appropriate training.

When cases such as the ones summarized occur, school officials often respond by suggesting that the troubled professional has betrayed the public trust and should be made an example. However, this response assumes that such cases are relatively isolated phenomena. Indeed, they are not. One key to preventing similar cases is realizing that almost any educator can fall victim to his or her own lack of understanding of professional boundaries and how to handle close relationships with students. This realization should stimulate school officials to develop proactive prevention programs, not simply to look for scapegoats.

Concerned colleagues often are the first individuals to observe a fellow teacher crossing the professional boundaries. But telling their school administrator about their concerns is not a sufficient response to the problem. That should be clear from the Harris case. Teachers themselves can be the most effective resource when it comes to intervening in order to help a colleague at risk, because teachers in trouble often feel safer talking to a

trusted colleague. Training teachers in how to observe and intervene and, when necessary, to refer a troubled colleague for administrative assistance can save professional and personal lives from the shattering experience of an accusation of sexual misconduct. However, training teachers should not be viewed as a substitute for training administrators in how to be effective supervisors and mentors for teachers and other staff.

A Therapeutic Training and Supervision Model

One response to controversy is policy development. When a teacher-student sexual misconduct case occurs, the school district may be tempted simply to address the problem at the policy level by attempting to define, often in narrow terms, the limits of contact between teachers and students. However, this approach is simplistic and may create more problems than it solves.

Ann Majestic, the school district's attorney in the Schaenman case, does not recommend that schools dictate the level of appropriate contact, because doing so can discourage productive, positive relationships as well as unprofessional ones (*News & Observer*, 29 September 1994, p. A1). She believes that "all the community-based programs have the primary purpose of [adults] spending time with students away from school. There's nothing inherently wrong. I think the risk is you might overcorrect. You might adopt a policy so strict you can't have any out-of-school contact."

Majestic is right on target. The overriding lesson in the preceding cases is that teachers can intervene with children and help them turn their lives around but that they need guidance and training to avoid overstepping professional boundaries. They cannot advise and help students or act as adult mentors if the district guidelines and policies say, in effect, "Stay away from students."

Therapeutic training and supervision is designed 1) to create awareness of the potential for sexual misconduct and unprofessional conduct in close, helping relationships between educators and students and 2) to help teachers, counselors, and others avoid unprofessional conduct as they build productive interpersonal relationships as advisors to students. The therapeutic training and supervision model comprises three phases: training, modeling, and supervision.

Training Teacher-Advisors

Leadership for inservice training is an administrative function in most schools, but the role of trainer may be filled by a principal or someone the principal designates, such as an assistant administrator, counselor, lead teacher, or department head. The trainer should facilitate staff learning in two key areas: 1) characteristics of effective advising and 2) professional relationships and risks. The trainer also should assist staff to identify sources of professional support and additional or ongoing training.

Following are important understandings that should be conveyed during therapeutic training:

Effective advisors understand the principle of transference. When students in need of emotional, social, and intellectual support work closely with teachers, they are likely to adopt intimate feelings for their teachers that are similar to feelings they have had in past close relationships. This process is called *transference*, and it is a natural process, often a productive one. However, transference can lead to problems if advisors do not recognize the extent of the students' or their own emotional needs.

For example, a student may begin to see a teacher-advisor as a confidant or a surrogate parent who will provide care, nurture, and love. The advisor must be able to recognize the student's feelings and diplomatically help the student to realize the limits of the teacher-student relationship.

Following is how one teacher addressed a student who was beginning to overstep the boundary of the advisor-student relationship:

> I am concerned about your mom and dad's divorce, but I can't take over their role. I am your advisor, not your parent. I know you don't like going home after school and would rather spend time talking to me about your problems. But I have my own family obligations after school. I know that there will be times when a crisis comes up and you need to talk after school. That's okay once in a while but not on a regular basis.
>
> I do want you to know that I am here to help you. I understand how tough things are for you right now, and I will do my best to encourage you. But I also know that feeling sorry for yourself does not help you move on

with your life. Let's do three things that I believe will help. First, let's talk about how you can get back to work and not let your grades slip anymore. Let's be specific and make a plan. Second, I know you are concerned about your mom's depression over your dad's leaving. Let's ask your mom to join our conversation and talk about getting some help. I know a good social service agency that can assist with emergency food and fuel allowances and legal help. Third, I know that you are free during fourth period. I have an extra-help class then with some kids who are going through situations similar to yours. Why don't you come by.

Note that the advisor:

1. States the limits of the relationship,
2. Reaffirms the helping nature of the relationship, and
3. Suggests a specific plan for addressing the student's needs.

Effective advisors understand their own emotional needs. Students who are emotionally needy and are unable to fulfill their needs through family relationships may seek to develop relationships with advisors that go beyond professional boundaries. Advisors who are themselves emotionally in need are most vulnerable to the seductive dependency of an unprofessional relationship. Indeed, they may be as likely to initiate such a relationship as to respond to a student's needs. Thus it is important for effective advisors not only to recognize the nature of students' feelings, but also to be self-reflective in order to understand their own emotions

and needs and to avoid fulfilling those needs through inappropriate relationships with their advisees.

Effective advisors understand propriety issues related to helping relationships. Certain professional boundaries involve the nature of situations or locations in which advisors and students interact. Effective advisors do not take students to lunch alone, invite students to their home, regularly write notes or letters to students, or make physical contact. Such situations and actions often invite both students and teachers to step over the professional boundary of the helping relationship, because distinctions between professional and personal interests and needs become blurred.

Professional propriety means that helping relationships are conducted more publicly than personal relationships. Therefore, group situations often are preferable to one-on-one interactions.

Effective advisors understand the emotional and physical development of students. At various stages of their lives, students express feelings related to their emotional and physical development. Elementary students, for example, need a strong emotional parent-child bond. When a student's real parents are absent or emotionally distant, the caring teacher may be seen as a surrogate. The elementary child who says to his teacher, "I want you to be my mommy," often means it literally. But the teacher who adopts this surrogate role does a disservice to the child and the child's real family. Helping does not mean taking over; effective helping in such a situation means modeling another adult role, not the parent role.

Charlene Stroughn, a fifth-grade teacher in the Roosevelt Public Schools on Long Island, New York, spells out the role that I believe concerned teachers can play without becoming parent figures. She comments:

> Sometimes, mentally speaking, you take a kid home with you. Some kids have such troubled lives it's hard to think about teaching them. You want to help. And you know you have to try to ameliorate whatever situations they are dealing with. Situations like separation, fighting, a sibling might be in jail, there might be drugs in the household. As a teacher, you're confronted with this. And what you try to do is say, whatever else goes on, when you walk in here you are safe and you are here to learn. (*Newsday*, 8 January 1996, p. A25)

Stroughn does not become the parent, but she mentally "takes a kid home." She makes her classroom as much a home as she can. She provides care and a safe place. But she does not confuse her main role. Her primary job, as she says, is to help her students "get the best education possible."

Teachers at the middle school, junior high, and high school levels also face challenges to professional boundaries, most often when they work with students who are rebelling against their parents and other authorities. Sometimes, like their elementary colleagues, secondary teachers would like to take over the parent role for their needy students. But the consequences of doing so with a rebellious teenager are very different from those that might be encountered in working with an elementary school student looking for a loving parent figure.

Secondary teachers need to understand that sexual involvement can be one form of rebellion in adolescence. And having sex with one's teacher can be viewed as the ultimate rebellion by some students. But sexual involvement also is an expression of emotional need. When students who believe that "no one" listens to them or cares for them find a teacher-advisor who does listen and care, they often transfer feelings of affection to that advisor. If teachers fail to understand this transference — and fail to take steps to reassert the appropriate boundary — then their relationships with students may escalate to sexual involvement.

Modeling Advisory Relationships

Administrators who embark on therapeutic training and supervision become, as the title suggests, quasi-therapists. This role is most evident in the modeling and supervisory phases.

Administrators model appropriate advisory relationships by becoming advisors to their staff and by creating trust through an emphasis on the following:

- Listening;
- Expressing feelings of concern and caring;
- Being empathetic;
- Demonstrating acceptance;
- Providing feedback on actions and observations; and
- Offering support.

For example, an administrator intervenes when a teacher is experiencing a professional problem, such as

a conflict with a disruptive student. The administrator models appropriate advisory behavior by listening to the teacher and the student and mediating the conflict, in the process modeling the preceding behaviors.

The same procedure can be used when teachers or other staff approach the administrator to discuss a personal problem or when such a problem becomes evident in a teacher's behavior or performance. For example, one high school administrator noticed that a teacher on his staff appeared to be getting too personally involved with a student. He discussed his observation with the teacher calmly and objectively, and then he listened to her response:

> I don't get it. I've never been too involved with any of my students. I've always had a line I never crossed. And I've been teaching for 20 years; I've seen it all. But I find myself spending more and more time trying to help Frank [the student] get through the death of his mother.
>
> Actually, he's handling the grieving process pretty well. But I can't seem to let him go on his own. I keep inviting him in for conferences and trying to help. All of a sudden it hit me last week. I'm trying to help too much! I'm the one who needs the contact. I'm the one who likes talking to him and looks forward to our meetings. Here I am, a 42-year-old woman acting clueless. I guess that I've just been lonely since my divorce. When I meet with Frank, it just feels good to talk to someone who needs me.
>
> I'd better do some self-correcting here. Thanks for noticing that I was spending too much time with Frank

and for inviting me to talk. Sometimes a person just doesn't see things clearly.

By expressing concern and stating his observations in a nonjudgmental way, the administrator allowed the teacher to reflect on her own feelings and to realize that she was in danger of stepping over professional boundaries. Modeling, in cases such as this one, also becomes mentoring. The administrator's intervention sends a message to staff that professional and personal problems are important to him and that he is available to help, not to judge or take on the problem as his own. This is precisely the role that the teacher-advisor must adopt in order to be an effective helper for students with problems.

Supervising Teacher-Advisors

A young male high school teacher approached his administrator in this way:

> It's starting to get to me. All of these kids who have problems with alcoholism in their families keep coming to my room and talking. At first I thought it was neat. I know how painful it is to have an alcoholic parent; it's something I'll never forget. In fact, it's one of the reasons I went into teaching, to help kids get through these kinds of problems. My 10th-grade English teacher helped me get through the pain. I wanted to be just like him.
>
> But a lot of these students, particularly the girls, keep suggesting that I am the only person that they can trust and that they never have had a real father to talk to

about personal things. It's flattering. I think some of them even have a crush on me. I was dancing with one of these students at the junior prom last week, and I literally had to tear myself away from her. I felt myself slipping away from my teacher role and getting personally involved. Let's face it, I'm 25 and she's 17. That's only 8 years difference.

I'm confused about where my teacher role ends and a personal relationship begins. I didn't learn about this stuff in college. John [a colleague] thinks I've gone too far and need to pull back. He suggested that I talk to you and ask for your advice. Has this ever happened to you?

This incident demonstrates two things. First, the administrator has established an appropriate level of trust with the teacher, which allows and encourages the teacher to turn to the administrator with such a problem. Second, at least one colleague — John — is aware of the potential for unprofessional conduct and, having observed this young teacher's behavior, has intervened to advise the teacher to seek help.

These are excellent starting points for therapeutic supervision. Training and modeling teach staff about professional boundaries, how to recognize when limits are being pushed, and where to turn for assistance. The teacher in this case has asked for direct assistance, which is a positive step. But, indeed, such supervision might better begin before even a minor incident occurs.

One effective starting point for therapeutic supervision is for the administrator to initiate regular one-on-one and group meetings with teacher-advisors. The

purpose of these meetings is to focus on how to effectively advise and help, sources of ongoing support when questions and issues arise, resources for further training, and the hazards involved in advising at-risk or emotionally needy students.

In these sessions the administrator encourages teachers to talk about issues that they often keep to themselves, such as feelings of attraction toward students and concerns about becoming too involved. The message in these meetings should be clear: No topic is "off limits." Often, teachers can learn from one another's experiences.

One-on-one meetings also provide opportunities for administrators to confront problematic situations directly, as the following comments illustrate. The administrator is addressing a teacher who seems about to cross a professional boundary:

> Dave, you are a good teacher. You have the potential to be one of the best I've known. But you need to stop taking kids out to lunch with you one-on-one. You are asking for trouble.
>
> I know that you want to help each student, but you need to do it in a professional manner. Teachers cannot give the appearance of being students' friends or buddies. That's not their professional role. When they ignore the professional role, some people will get the wrong idea and begin to suspect that more is going on than meets the eye. For example, when you go off to lunch with Gina [a student], it sends the wrong message.
>
> Take a cue from Lorraine or Jim [other colleagues]. They meet students over lunch in the cafeteria or dur-

ing a study break in the library. Jim even shoots hoops with some of his advisees during the after-school recreation program. A lot of productive advising can be done in these informal sessions without creating the appearance or suspicion of impropriety.

Part of the supervision process involves not just confrontation, such as this administrator has done with the teacher named Dave, but also resource support. In this case the administrator mentioned two of Dave's colleagues whose behavior might serve as a model. Comprehensive training, administrator modeling, and group meetings, in which colleagues serve as models and resources for one another, are essential components of therapeutic supervision.

Recognizing and Overcoming Resistance to Therapeutic Supervision

Administrators who wish to train teachers and other staff using the therapeutic model should expect resistance from several "groups":

- The "not me" group, who believe that others might be tempted to overstep professional boundaries but, certainly, they would not.
- The "not here" group, who believe that sexual misconduct and other inappropriate conduct by teachers happens only in other schools and districts.
- The "burned" group, who have tried to help in other situations where they have received little training, and they have been "burned" — criticized, embarrassed, or reprimanded.

- The "blame the teacher" group, who believe that any educator who crosses a professional boundary is at fault and should be fired, not helped.

The message to these groups must be clear. First, any professional — teacher, administrator, counselor — can be caught unaware and cross a professional boundary. The most innocent situation can be seen in an unfavorable light; the most caring service can be carried to an inappropriate extreme. Everyone can benefit from awareness training.

Second, appropriate training will help teachers know how and when to intervene and what to do to help colleagues who have crossed or seem about to cross a professional boundary. When such training includes all staff, everyone is operating from the same guidelines; that helps to prevent misunderstandings and forestall criticism.

Third, therapeutic supervision is not designed to root out sexual predators or put them on their guard. It is designed to help all teachers understand the social, emotional, and intellectual dynamics of advising and helping students who may be emotionally needy. Untrained teachers, even with the best intentions, can create or fall into relationships and situations that are inappropriate for professional educators.

Conclusion

As we approach the 21st century, two important dialogues are going on concerning teachers and their at-risk students. First, there are 19 million at-risk students in the United States. How can we expand the natural helping role of teachers to train them to be effective advisors and helpers for these at-risk students?

Second, when untrained teachers get involved in offering help, they risk creating or stumbling into situations where professional boundaries may be crossed and incidents of sexual misconduct may occur. How can we train teachers to avoid these hazards when they get involved in helping students?

These two dialogues are inseparable. We cannot accomplish the first and neglect the second. The central concern addressed in this fastback — helping teachers avoid unprofessional conduct and charges of teacher-student harassment and, perhaps most pointedly, sexual misconduct — is pressing. Administrators need not wait for a case of sexual misconduct to be splashed across the local newspaper's front page to take action. The public spotlight is turned on such cases in towns, cities, and rural areas across the country, seemingly on

a daily basis. No local case is needed to emphasize that training and supervision are needed.

Increasingly, schools are being asked by a demanding public to help students solve nonschool, nonacademic problems. While teachers cannot overcome the ills of society, their intervention on behalf of troubled and emotionally needy students can be essential to those students' successes in school and in life. Training teachers to do that job well will benefit individual students and the school as an institution.

Therefore, school leaders will be well-advised to be proactive and to enter the dialogue strongly. Therapeutic supervision provides an effective vehicle for doing so. At a time when schools and teachers are being challenged to serve every student well, a proactive stance toward such training and supervision is not merely "politically correct," it is essential.

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The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation was established on 13 October 1966 with the signing, by Dr. George H. Reavis, of the irrevocable trust agreement creating the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation Trust.

George H. Reavis (1883-1970) entered the education profession after graduating from Warrensburg Missouri State Teachers College in 1906 and the University of Missouri in 1911. He went on to earn an M.A. and a Ph.D. at Columbia University. Dr. Reavis served as assistant superintendent of schools in Maryland and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1929 he was appointed director of instruction for the Ohio State Department of Education. But it was as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Cincinnati public schools (1939-48) that he rose to national prominence.

Dr. Reavis' dream for the Educational Foundation was to make it possible for seasoned educators to write and publish the wisdom they had acquired over a lifetime of professional activity. He wanted educators and the general public to "better understand (1) the nature of the educative process and (2) the relation of education to human welfare."

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